



November 14, 2022

Mary Erickson, Forest Supervisor
Custer Gallatin Nation Forest
10 East Babcock Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59715

Dear Mary,

The Public Land Water Access Association writes again to restate our position after the release of the *Preliminary Environmental Assessment for the East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange Project*. PLWA has been engaged in access work in the Crazy Mountains since 2006 and has worked on and sought out the thoughts and opinions of those involved in the East Side access issue since 2015. During this time we have noted an increasing need for improved access in the area, and appreciate the hard work and time all those involved have contributed to finding a solution to this issue. We agree that addressing critical issues through creation of the East Trunk Trail would be favorable, especially if they involve plans to grant permanent public easements. However, we strongly feel that without addressing access issues in the Sweetgrass Drainage, the required due diligence for the proposal remains absent, and we cannot offer our support.

PLWA appreciates the need for compromise and flexibility in public access work, however it remains our position that the Sweetgrass Trail is a vital public access point and that the road which has historically provided access through the drainage, specifically in Sections 7, 8, and 10 to the border of the National Forest, must be included in all evaluations and planning protocols. The current proposal fails to address a significant area which has historically provided public access and cedes it without comment into private hands. The current proposal offers access that is inferior to what has previously been enjoyed and available to the public, and as such there remains more work to be done.

There are things to appreciate about the current proposal. That said, we look forward to a complete evaluation and assessment being offered to the public and to our partner organizations so that we may comment and aid in evaluation of a proposal that will fairly address the needs of all parties involved. We thank everyone for their hard work on this issue.

Sincerely,

Bernard Lea,
President, *Public Land Water Access Association*

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